CITY OF BELMONT

Staff Report

DISCUSSION AND DIRECTION REGARDING WAYS TO KEEP THE BOARD INFORMED OF ONGOING FIRE SERVICE ISSUES

Honorable President and Board Members:

Summary
There is much activity related to fire services and staff seeks ways to ensure the board is kept informed and provides direction as needed. Staffs recommends the board meet monthly and create a sub-committee to serve as a "steering committee" for staff in ongoing negotiations regarding the future direction of fire services for Belmont.

Background
Last fall, the Belmont Fire Protection District provided direction to retain a financial consultant to prepare an assessment for spring 2005. On December 14, 2004, the Fire Protection District voted to send a letter of termination for the South County Fire Authority and to explore alternative service delivery methods. The following week, San Carlos took a similar action. Since that time, staff has sent a letter to San Mateo inquiring about their interest in providing fire services to Belmont. On January 12, Chief Lowden is expected to present a report to the South County commissioners regarding options for South County.

Discussion
In the next year to eighteen months, there will clearly be a significant focus on fire services. Traditionally, the city manager and the two City representatives on the South County board have handled work related to fire services. The Belmont Fire Protection District generally meets quarterly and has not been overly involved in the details of fire services. However, in light of recent actions and the increased importance on fire services in the coming year, staff believes it is critical that there is a better mechanism to manage fire issues and keep all members of the Fire Protection District up to speed on issues.

As such, staff recommends the Fire Protection District have regular monthly meetings until such time they are no longer needed. The purpose of these meetings would be to provide updates to the board members and solicit input or direction as appropriate for the ongoing discussions related to the future of fire services. It is suggested these meetings be set for the second meeting of the month, since the RDA regularly meets at the first meeting.

The city manager will take the lead role in discussions with other organizations regarding partnering, consolidating, contracting, etc. for fire services. However, this is a critical issue with long-range implications for the community and staff believes it is appropriate to have some ongoing informal guidance from the policy makers. Therefore, staff believes it would be beneficial to have a council subcommittee to serve as a "steering committee" for fire negotiations. Final and formal actions would still be the responsibility of the full Fire Protection District board but the sub-committee could assist with formulating the parameters and serve as a sounding board during the negotiations. Although the City's representatives to the South County board would be good candidates for the sub-committee, any two members of the Fire Protection District board could serve in that capacity.

Fiscal Impact
There is no direct fiscal impact to this report.

Public Contact
A copy of this report was sent to the Fire Chief and the item was posted on the agenda as required by law.

Recommendation
Staff recommends the Fire Protection District establish monthly meetings at the second meeting of the month until further notice and that a sub-committee of two members be appointed to serve as a steering committee on the future of fire services.

Alternatives
1.   Provide alternative direction regarding methods for keeping the board informed on fire services issues.
2.   Provide alternative direction regarding methods to gain input from policy makers on negotiations for future fire services.
3.   Take no action at this time.

Respectfully submitted,

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Daniel Rich
Interim District Manager